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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health

Statement submitted by Institute of International Sociology of Gorizia, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement*

In the Conference entitled "Borders and Public Health" organized in Gorizia, Italy on May 15-16, 2009, discussions focused on the role of Borders and Public Health in achieving the MDGs and in preparation for the July ECOSOC High Level Segment. More than 200 participants attended the meeting. Opening comments were made by ECOSOC Vice-President, Amb. Tiina Intelman, the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Franco Frattini, the Romanian Minister for European Integration, Hon. Vasile Puscas and the highest authorities of the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region and of Gorizia.

The need and opportunities for action to address issues of borders and public health has never been in sharper focus. Participants recognised that current health and economic threats related to pandemic influenza H1N1, the financial crisis, and climate change threaten to make socially and environmentally-caused health inequities even worse setting the achievement of the MDGs at risk. There is an urgent need to reconsider "border and public health" together with the challenges and opportunities of today's fast changing world.

Participants also acknowledged that health entails many aspects of fundamental human needs and rights relating to MDGs and that to achieve these goals, new practices and policies ought to be implemented with the support of local governments and NGOs. This requires careful consideration of the context-specific obstacles to sustainable policies tackling public health issues in terms of poverty reduction, and aiming at overcoming inequalities of access determined by gender, education, financial resources, etc.

The Conference analyzed different types of borders in terms of their impact on local strategies. It expressed support for the creation of a global forum where border-contexts may share unexpectedly common problems and elaborate joint solutions. In the context of public health, the implementation of local public health systems is not only effective and original and applicable to situations with some common characteristics but also legitimizes the system of governance for an integrated local development.

A number of recommendations were made to ECOSOC.

- It is essential to reconsider the role of borders when evaluating the effectiveness of implementation of public health and local development strategies integrating international aid vis-à-vis national development agenda.

- Subjective borders are often neglected and need to be addressed to enhance the development of peripheries. They are associated with poverty and marginalization, gender inequalities, illness or extreme stress, natural disasters, and prolonged conflict or war.

- The participatory role of civil society ought to be enhanced as true actor. Civil society is a privileged observer and advocate of people interests in the national and international debates

* Issued without formal editing.

of the public-health effectiveness agenda. Civil society expresses local democratic ownership, self-governance, local knowledge and expertise. It is indispensable to activate sustainable development and represents the strongest bridge over borders.

- It is indispensable to enhance the building of public-private partnership to foster the commitment and wide use of new technologies in public health practices.

- Civil society organisations operating in border areas need to gather and initiate a global forum to share practices and elaborate common solutions.